

A. AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 5, 6, 23, 24 and 41 and amend the claims as indicated hereinafter.

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-implemented method for determining an amount to be billed to a customer for the use of computing resources, the method comprising:
determining usage data that indicates usage, by the customer during a specified period of time, of a set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer, wherein over time, computing resources may be de-allocated from the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer and additional computing resources may be allocated to the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer from a plurality of computing resources; and
in a computer system determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data, ~~and value data wherein, the value data~~ that specifies a number of service units that each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources is capable of providing per unit time-time, and a reservation fee for reserving for the customer other computing resources from the plurality of computing resources that are not included in the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer.
2. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein:
the usage data indicates usage, during the specified period of time, of each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources, and
the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage of each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources during the specified period of time and the value data.
3. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein:
the usage data specifies, for each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources, an amount of time that each computing resource was used during the

specified period of time, and

the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time.

4. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as recited in Claim 3, wherein the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the number of service units that each computing resource is capable of providing per unit time and the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the number of service units that each computing resource is capable of providing per unit time, the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time and an amount to be charged per service unit.

5-6. (CANCELED)

7. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein:
the method further comprises determining additional usage data that indicates usage, by the customer during the specified period of time, of one or more additional computing resources from the plurality of computing resources, and
the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data, the value data, the additional usage data and additional value data wherein the value data specifies a number of service units that each of the one or more additional computing resources is capable of providing per unit time.
8. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the set of one or more computing resources comprise an initial computing resource configuration.
9. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the set of one or more computing resources comprise a virtual server farm.

10. (CANCELED)
11. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein one or more computing resources includes one or more processors.
12. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more storage resources.
13. (ORIGINAL) The method as recited in Claim 12, wherein the one or more storage resources include one or more volatile storage devices.
14. (ORIGINAL) The method as recited in Claim 13, wherein the one or more storage resources include one or more non-volatile storage resources.
15. (ORIGINAL) The method as recited in Claim 14, where in the one or more non-volatile storage resources include one or more disks.
16. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more computer software resources.
17. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more communications link resources.
18. (ORIGINAL) The method as recited in Claim 17, wherein the one or more communications link resources includes one or more Internet connections.
19. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-readable medium carrying instructions for determining an amount to bill a customer for the use of computing resources, the instructions-including instructions which, when executed by one or more processors in a computer system, cause:

determining usage data that indicates usage, by the customer during a specified period of time, of a set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer, wherein over time, computing resources may be de-allocated from the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer and additional computing resources may be allocated to the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer from a plurality of computing resources; and

determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data, ~~and value data wherein, the value data~~ that specifies a number of service units that each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources is capable of providing per unit time, time, and a reservation fee for reserving for the customer other computing resources from the plurality of computing resources that are not included in the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer.

20. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein:

the usage data indicates usage, during the specified period of time, of each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources, and

the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage of each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources during the specified period of time and the value data.

21. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein:

the usage data specifies, for each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources, an amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time, and

the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based

upon the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time.

22. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 21, wherein the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the number of service units that each computing resource is capable of providing per unit time and the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the number of service units that each computing resource is capable of providing per unit time, the amount of time that each computing resource was used during the specified period of time and an amount to be charged per service unit.

23-24. (CANCELED)

25. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein:
the computer-readable medium includes one or more additional instructions which, when executed by the one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to perform the step of determining additional usage data that indicates usage, by the customer during the specified period of time, of one or more additional computing resources from the plurality of computing resources, and
the step of determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data and value data includes determining the amount to be billed to the customer based upon the usage data, the value data, the additional usage data and additional value data wherein the value data specifies a number of service units that each of the one or more additional computing resources is capable of providing per unit time.

26. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein the set of one or more computing resources comprise an initial computing resource configuration.

27. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein the set of one or more computing resources comprise a virtual server farm.
28. (CANCELED)
29. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein one or more computing resources includes one or more processors.
30. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more storage resources.
31. (ORIGINAL) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 30, wherein the one or more storage resources include one or more volatile storage devices.
32. (ORIGINAL) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more storage resources include one or more non-volatile storage resources.
33. (ORIGINAL) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 32, where in the one or more non-volatile storage resources include one or more disks.
34. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more computer software resources.
35. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 19, wherein the plurality of computing resources includes one or more communications link resources.
36. (ORIGINAL) The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 35, wherein the one or more communications link resources includes one or more Internet connections.

37-38. (CANCELED)

39. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A billing apparatus for determining an amount to bill a customer comprising:

a memory configured to store usage data and value data, wherein the usage data indicates usage, by the customer during a specified period of time, of a set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer, wherein over time, computing resources may be de-allocated from the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer and additional computing resources may be allocated to the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer from a plurality of computing resources and wherein the value data specifies a number of service units that each computing resource from the set of one or more computing resources is capable of providing per unit time; and

a billing mechanism communicatively coupled to the memory and configured to determine the amount to bill to the customer based upon both the usage data, ~~and the value data,~~ and a reservation fee for reserving for the customer other computing resources from the plurality of computing resources that are not included in the set of one or more computing resources assigned exclusively to the customer.

40-41. (CANCELED)